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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of
Public Affairs

Selected Speeches and News Releases

April 23 - April 29, 1992

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

USDA ANNOUNCES 1992—CROP COUNTY LOAN AND PURCHASE RATES FOR CERTAIN GRAINS

WASHINGTON, April 23—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation today announced county loan and purchase rates for the 1992 crops of wheat, barley, oats and rye.

The 1992-crop county price support rates were determined in accordance with the Agricultural Act of 1949 and reflect changes in the national average price support rates. Some county rates were adjusted to reflect location and transportation costs. These adjustments were limited to a three percent change in addition to the change in the national average price support levels from the 1991-crop price support levels.

Copies of the rate schedules are available from: Tom Fink, Cotton, Grain and Rice Price Support Division, USDA/ASCS, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013; telephone (202) 720-8701.

Bruce Merkle, (202) 720-8206.

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ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE BOARD TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARINGS

WASHINGTON, April 24—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced the Alternative Agriculture Research and Commercialization (AARC) Board will hold eight public hearings around the country in May and June. Each hearing will be from 9 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

The board was designated by Congress under the 1990 Farm Bill to establish policy, implement programs and direct the activities of an independent center within USDA to expand industrial uses of farm and forest products. The board reports directly to the secretary of agriculture.

The hearings were scheduled to provide information about AARC, receive input on alternative industrial uses of agricultural materials and discuss mechanisms for transferring technology and supporting finance, rural development, trade and competitiveness and public/private partnerships, according to Paul O'Connell, deputy administrator for

special programs for USDA's Cooperative State Research Service.

The nine-member board held its first meeting April 13-14 and elected Martin Andreas as chairman. Andreas is vice president of marketing for Archer Daniels Midland. Paul O'Connell was appointed acting director.

Notice of the hearings will be published in the Federal Register. Those wishing to testify or receive more information may contact Paul O'Connell or Joe Roetheli at (202) 401-4860 or FAX (202) 401-5179.

The hearings are tentatively scheduled as follows:

May 12—Cedar Rapids, Iowa (primary focus: starch, oilseeds and livestock)

Sheraton Inn: 525 33rd Ave., S.W.

Directions: I-380 North to exit 17; nearby on left.

Phone: 319-366-8671

FAX: 319-362-1420

May 13—Atlanta, Ga. (primary focus: oilseeds and fibers)

Sheraton Hartsfield Hotel: 3601 N. Desert Dr.

Directions: Intersection of I-285 at Exit 3

Phone: 404-762-5141

FAX: 404-768-1106

May 14—Newark, N.J. (primary focus: starch and fibers)

Newark Airport Vista Hotel: 1170 Spring St.

Directions: Newark Airport area go to Routes 1 & 9 and take Service Road to Vista Hotel

Phone: 908-351-3900

FAX: 908-351-9556

May 27—Portland, Ore. (primary focus: oilseeds and fibers)

Red Lion Jantzen Beach: 909 N. Hayden Island Dr.

Directions: Intersection I-5 north at exit 308 (Jantzen Beach)

Phone: 503-283-4466

FAX: 503-735-4847

May 28—Sacramento, Calif. (primary focus: fibers and energy)

Hyatt Regency: 12th & L St.

Directions: Downtown, across from State Capitol

Phone: 916-443-1234

FAX: 916-321-6631

June 16—Bloomington, Minn. (primary focus: oilseeds and dairy)

Crown Sterling Hotel: 7901 34th Ave., South

Directions: I-94 at 34th Ave. exit

Phone: 612-854-1000

FAX: 612-854-6557

June 17—Bonner Springs, Kan. (primary focus: livestock, oilseeds and starch)

National Agricultural Center & Hall of Fame: 630 Hall of Fame Dr.

Directions: I-70 at KS Hwy 7 (Bonner Springs), then NE one mile

Phone: 913-721-1075

FAX: 913-721-1075

June 18—Irving, Texas (primary focus: oilseeds, fibers and livestock)

Airport Holiday Inn North: 4441 Hwy 114 at Esters Road

Directions: Intersection I-635 & Hwy 114

Phone: 214-929-8181

FAX: 214-929-8181

Edwin Moffett (202) 720-4026

#

USDA ADDS POTATOES, SALMON TO COMMODITIES AVAILABLE UNDER PUBLIC LAW 480

WASHINGTON, April 24—Under Secretary of Secretary of Agriculture Richard T. Crowder today announced that two additional commodities—pink salmon and potatoes (including potato products) have been added to the list of commodities available in fiscal 1992 under Public Law 480—the Food For Peace Program.

Commodities previously made available under the program in fiscal 1992 are: wheat and wheat products, rice and rice products, feed grains and feed grain products, dry edible beans, dry edible peas, lentils, plant protein, edible vegetable oils (soybean, sunflower, peanut and cottonseed oils), soy food products, peanuts, dairy products (butter, butter oil and nonfat dry milk), Atlantic mackerel, edible and inedible tallow, cotton and solid wood products.

Under the Food for Peace Program, U.S. agricultural commodities are donated or sold to foreign governments to meet humanitarian needs and assist in economic development.

Commodities made available under the program are selected using criteria established in Section 401 of the P.L. 480 legislation. These criteria include U.S. production capacity for the designated commodity, domestic requirements, farm and consumer price levels, commercial export levels, and carry-over stocks.

Additional information is available from Mary Chambliss, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, at (202) 720-3573.

Rebecca Broeking (202) 720-0328

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USDA ADOPTS NEW PYRAMID GRAPHIC FOR NUTRITION GUIDE

WASHINGTON, April 28—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today unveiled a new "food guide pyramid" which the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services consider the most effective graphic of federal dietary guidance.

Madigan said extensive research showed the new pyramid clearly defines the role different foods play in a balanced diet and can be readily understood by all Americans.

"Last April, I placed a hold on publication of a graphic called 'The Eating Right Pyramid,'" Madigan said. "When I first saw the original graphic, I was not convinced its message would be clear to millions of children and adults who participate in USDA nutrition programs."

Madigan said the original pyramid graphic was tested on adults with at least a high school education with an interest in nutrition and at least some responsibility for meal planning and preparation.

"But our audience is far wider than that," Madigan said. "USDA's food programs touch everyone—from children to the elderly—cutting across the economic, educational and social spectrum. Many of our participants have low literacy skills. We need to be sure any message we put out can be understood clearly by everyone who participates in our programs."

Madigan ordered a new study that presented several graphics, including the pyramid, to 26 focus groups in four cities around the country. During the process, revisions were made to all the graphics, and some were dropped.

“Two graphics emerged as the strongest from the focus group testing,” Madigan said. “One was a revised version of the pyramid, and the other was a bowl. These were then tested with 3,017 individuals.”

Madigan said the results clearly showed the revised pyramid was best in helping people understand the importance of eating different amounts of food from the different food groups, plus the need for moderation in the diet. It scored about equal to the bowl graphic in showing the need for a variety of foods.

“All foods are important to a balanced diet,” Madigan said. “If the pyramid recommends fewer servings of one type of food than of another, that doesn’t mean one food is less important than another. All foods provide important nutrients. The trick is making lower-fat choices.”

The new “food guide pyramid” reflects advice set forth in the “Dietary Guidelines for Americans,” a joint publication of USDA and DHHS. This represents the federal government’s official advice on how to achieve a healthy diet.

The food guide pyramid recommends six to 11 daily servings of breads, cereals, rice and pasta; three to five servings of vegetables; two to four servings of fruits; two to three servings of milk, yogurt and cheese; and two to three servings of meats, poultry, fish, dry beans and peas, eggs and nuts. It also recommends that fats, oils and sweets be used sparingly.

Dick Thaxton (703) 305-2039
Roger Runningen (202) 720-4623

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FACT SHEET

FOOD GUIDE GRAPHIC PROMOTION AND DISTRIBUTION PLANS

Promotion and distribution of the Food Guide Graphic will be accomplished in three phases: immediate, near future, and long term. It is our intention that the new Food Guide Graphic will be used in a wide variety of government publications concerning nutrition, in nutrition text books, and hopefully by private sector cooperators. These plans will take time to be fully developed and implemented now that the research and decision making process is complete.

IMMEDIATE

Promotion of the Food Guide Graphic will begin today. This afternoon, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services will address a nation-wide audience of school food service administrators in a satellite tele-conference call in cooperation with the Food Service Management Institute. In this address, the Food Guide Graphic will be introduced for the first time to the professionals responsible for the management of the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs.

The Food Guide Graphic and its supporting material will subsequently be forwarded to all school food service administrators to supplement the Dietary Guidance for Child Nutrition Programs, a publication designed to help implement the Dietary Guidelines for Americans in the nation's school cafeterias.

NEAR FUTURE

In the short run, we are making copies of the Food Guide Graphic support publication available immediately to all State Directors of Child Nutrition, Food Stamps and WIC Programs. We will also be sending copies to each Indian Tribal Organization that operates a food distribution or WIC program. Finally, the Cooperative Extension Service, active in every state, territory and in nearly every one of the nation's 3,150 counties, will receive the new Food Guide Graphic. Through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), the Extension Service will provide millions of low-income youth and families with in-depth instruction about the Food Guide Graphic and nutrition.

The Human Nutrition Information Service will include the pyramid graphic in three brochures to be published this year. The first will be as a lesson plan in the "Dietary Guidelines and Your Health: A Health Educators Guide to Health and Fitness." The guide will be made available to health teachers before the start of the new school year. A new publication for lowliteracy adults, "Making Food Choices" will contain the pyramid and appropriate descriptive materials. A series on helping older healthy Americans follow the Dietary Guidelines, due out in September, will also be published with the new graphic.

Similar distribution of the Food Guide Graphic and the accompanying support material will be made to other USDA agencies and Cabinet level Departments with an interest in nutrition and health issues. Professional health and medical associations will receive the material and be encouraged to provide the information to their members. Trade associations with interests in food and nutrition will be invited to provide the Food Guide Graphic and material through their channels of communication to their members and constituents. And finally, the media, including newsletters, magazines and other popular publications will be provided with information about the Food Guide Graphic for inclusion in their publications.

LONG TERM

Plans are currently underway for a wide variety of uses of the Food Guide Graphic in on-going efforts to achieve wide-spread recognition and acceptance of the Food Guide Graphic and its message by a broad audience of Americans. These efforts will include using all types of communications media from posters to convention displays to inclusion on food package labeling to public service announcements. We are limited only by our imagination and the willingness of the public and private sectors to help us get this vital message to all Americans.

Neal Osten (301) 436-8617
Issued: April 28, 1992

BACKGROUNDER

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

FOOD GRAPHIC TESTING AND RESEARCH

PURPOSE AND MESSAGE

In 1988, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) contracted to have developed a new graphic to help communicate the principle messages of the Daily Food Guide contained in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. That effort led to the development of what was known as "The Eating Right Pyramid" which was tested on the traditional nutrition audience, middle class adults with a high school education with an interest in nutrition and at least some responsibility for meal planning and preparation. The new graphic was being readied for release in April of 1991 when Secretary Edward Madigan asked that further tests be conducted on a wider range of audiences, especially children and low-income, low literacy adults.

In July of 1991, Bell Associates Inc. (BAI), of Cambridge, Massachusetts, was retained by USDA, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), to conduct an Evaluation of Dietary Guidance Graphic Alternatives. The project included development and field-testing of a series of graphic illustrations which, when used in combination with other materials, would carry selected messages of the *Dietary Guidelines*, specifically those of the Daily Food Guide, to Americans. The primary task of the project was to provide USDA and DHHS with a readily comprehensible graphic aid for communicating fundamental dietary principles and current knowledge of the basic nutritional needs of individuals.

The 1990 *Dietary Guidelines* contain seven principal statements reflecting current scientific consensus on the most important dietary measures associated with consuming adequate amounts of essential nutrients and reducing the risk of chronic disease in Americans. The underlying principles involve (a) nutritional adequacy through the consumption of appropriate amounts of a variety of foods, and (b) the reduction of chronic disease risk through moderated intake of fats, saturated fatty acids, cholesterol, sugar, sodium and alcohol and by increased consumption of vegetables, fruits, and grain products. The first guideline, "Eat a variety of foods," includes a Food Guide, which

contains messages relating to dietary moderation, proportionality, and variety. The Food Guide suggests a range of daily servings from each of the major food groups; (1) bread, cereal, rice & pasta (6-11 servings); (2) vegetables (3-5 servings); (3) fruit (2-4 servings); (4) milk, yogurt & cheese (2-3 servings); and (5) meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs & nuts (2-3 servings).

TESTING AND RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Starting in July of 1991, Bell Associates staff working with USDA and DHHS staff selected nutrition messages to be conveyed by the graphic materials. A series of graphic materials were developed that incorporated these messages. An advisory panel of experts to the contractor was assembled to advise the project on the graphic materials and on the research process. The list is attached.

The study conducted by BAI evaluated 415 graphics for their relevance to the *Dietary Guidelines*. Included in this review were more than 400 suggestions that were provided by the readers of USA TODAY.

The graphics were first tested with 26 focus groups containing children and low-income adults in Boston, Albuquerque, and Memphis. As the original testing for the Eating Right Pyramid was conducted with only middle class adults, the adults for these focus groups were recruited from either the Food Stamp Program or the WIC Program. Three of the focus groups contained nutrition advocates, food industry representatives and teachers.

Based on the results of the focus groups, a final, more limited series of ten graphic materials was developed and tested with over 3,000 children and adults through face-to-face message testing interviews in Albuquerque, Boise, Boston, Fort Lauderdale, and Memphis. The respondents, in general, included a larger portion of members from low-income families and ethnic minorities than would be representative of the national population.

All graphics were produced in Spanish as well as in English.

FINDINGS

The Evaluation of Dietary Guidance Graphic Alternatives has identified two graphic designs which, in single exposure, convey considerable information about the selection of a diet in agreement with current recommendations for health promotion. The two graphics, the pyramid

and the bowl, underwent design modifications and formative improvement during the course of the study.

Of the two graphics, the pyramid proved to be more effective in communicating the intended messages across the population subgroups examined, including children and food program participants.

The pyramid communicates three key guidance concepts—variety, moderation and proportionality.

The result of the children's focus groups indicate that they gave the overall highest ratings to the pyramid; and that "by the end of the session they seemed to have gained the most information about key messages from this graphic." These results suggest that presenting the pyramid graphic in the context of guided classroom discussion would be very effective in teaching the food guide to children.

Among children and low income adults in five geographically dispersed cities, the pyramid was more effective in communicating the message "eat less fats and sugars". In addition, the pyramid was more likely to promote an understanding of the proportionality message contained in text related to the number of servings. The bowl was slightly better at communicating the message "eat a variety of foods", which was the most readily communicated message intended by the graphics.

The pyramid is associated with significantly higher scores on indicators related to the concepts of moderating dietary fats and proportionality. However, with the exception of measures indicative of the ability of respondents to identify the major food groups and the number of servings recommended within each, none of the message scores achieved 50 percent of their maximum value. This is not surprising given the complexity and number of messages contained in the graphics.

However, even relatively well-educated adults had comparative difficulty identifying components of the intended graphic messages at levels that—taken alone—might be considered educationally useful. These results strongly suggest that either graphic would function best in contexts in which the entire message-matrix can be reinforced through instructional and counseling techniques and repeated exposure. This implies, minimally, that the graphic must be supported by explanatory materials if the full message range is to be understood.

On Representation of Fats, Oils and Sugars (FOS)

The FOS symbols and FOS pictures conveyed the moderation of fat and sugar intake message in different ways. The symbols, as would be expected, were associated with a more accurate identification of food groups that might contain fats and sugars. The pictures were more effective in highlighting the fats, oils and sugars section and the “use sparingly” text message. These results suggest that a combination of the alternative FOS representations could be developed to maximize their effectiveness.

On Background Color

Variation in background color did not appear to be an important graphic factor. Use of a black background appeared to enhance observation of the fats and oils symbols in identification of the food groups that may contain fats and sugars. In contrast, use of a color background was associated with some increased reporting of the “use sparingly” text related to intake of fats. Given the minor role of background color in conveying the graphic messages, the black background, which can be reproduced more easily, appears advantageous.

Misinformation

The pyramid was found to communicate less overall misinformation. In particular, it should be noted that there were no significant findings related to shape inversion (seeing good foods at the top of the shape and bad foods at the bottom).

On Preference

The final questions on the message testing interview were concerned with the respondent's preference for one shape or the other. Across the entire sample, more individuals favored the bowl (49.2 %) than the pyramid (44.4 %). Preference for the bowl was higher in low income and minority segments of the sample. Despite preference for the bowl, however, the pyramid remained more effective in communicating the *intended graphic messages* among those respondents as well as in the entire sample.

SUMMARY

The pyramid graphic was found to be most effective in conveying the messages of moderation and proportionality. The pyramid design might be further strengthened in conveying the total moderation message by

including both FOS pictures and symbols in the same graphic. The pyramid also has considerable strength in promoting the message of variety. Importantly, the pyramid graphic did not convey misinformation about variety, proportionality and moderation, nor about the importance of consuming foods in adequate amounts from all the major food groups to achieve a healthful diet.

The bowl design was found to be less effective in promoting the moderation and proportionality messages, but did illustrate the variety message somewhat better than the pyramid. Although respondents indicated a preference for the bowl shape, it is important to note that even in the groups where preference for the bowl was the strongest (i.e., younger, less educated, ethnic minority and low-income respondents), the pyramid was more likely to be identified as the graphic which suggested the moderation-of-fat message most clearly. Further, preference for the bowl was not linked to *effectiveness of intended messages* in those groups. In this study, the shape a respondent preferred was of less importance to policy development than the amount of intended information conveyed by each graphic.

ADVISORY PANEL TO THE CONTRACTOR

Nutrition Education

Cheryl Achterberg, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Nutrition Department, Pennsylvania State University

Isobel R. Contento, Ph.D.
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Teachers College, Columbia University

Mary Abbott Hess, M.S., R.D.
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Education

Laura Rendon, Ph.D.
Associate Research Professor
College of Education, Arizona State University

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Allan L. Baldinger, M.B.A.
Senior Vice President
Advertising Research Foundation

Lorna Opatow, M.B.A.
President
Opatow Associates, Inc.

Evaluation Research

Laura C. Leviton, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh

Judith D. Singer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Graduate School of Education, Harvard University

Communication

Istar Schwager, Ph.D.
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Elaine Bratic-Arkin
Health Communications Consultant

Cognitive Psychology

Irving E. Sigel, Ph.D.
Distinguished Research Psychologist
Educational Testing Service

Neal Osten (301) 436-8617
Issued: April 28, 1992

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EXTENSION VOLUNTEERS—THREE MILLION STRONG!

WASHINGTON—Community service volunteers are an integral part of the Cooperative Extension System (CES)—a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the 74 state land-grant universities, and county governments.

Extension volunteers are in every state and county, and in many local neighborhoods across the nation. Daily they give of themselves—their time, energy, and talent.

Three million strong—these men, women, youth and seniors unselfishly work in a variety of Extension efforts in agriculture, community leadership, youth and family education, economic development, and the environment.

Extension volunteers help initiate programs, teach, and serve on advisory committees and boards. They offer friendship and guidance. In many respects these grass-roots volunteers are the backbone of the Extension Service.

THE FAMILY TRUST PROGRAM

Typical of these dedicated volunteers are Dan and Joyce Mink of Polk County, GA. For the past two years they have volunteered their time to a parenting project for rural families in crisis. Dan is a counselor at the Georgia School for the Deaf. Joyce is a sociologist. They have five children. Dan is on dialysis, a result of a failed kidney transplant.

As a team, the Minks conduct a series of family group sessions three times a year. The project is called SPARK (Successful Parents and Responsible Kids). Families are referred to SPARK by state family service agencies and the courts.

“If we hadn’t come across Joyce and Dan, we wouldn’t have made it,” Polk County Extension agent Joy Padgett said. There was no funding budgeted for SPARK that first year.

Joyce and Dan could see the importance of keeping the program alive. They responded by donating time and resources. Their children became a part of the effort. They asked others to contribute time. They kept things going and are still doing so now.

“A lot of times there is a need for families to get together and discuss problems,” Dan said. “We guide the process, coordinate the support of other volunteers, and in the end help parents and children to communicate, solve problems, and express feelings.”

The Mink's five children (ages 12 through three) contribute to the sessions by answering some pretty tough questions about their family. This helps participating families see that they are not alone, that all families have problems, disagreements, or go through periodic emotional crisis.

"When people are able to show their true feelings, some healing can take place," said Dan. "It's amazing to see how the parents and the children look coming in and the difference, the improvements in their perspectives, how they feel when we're done. Talking things out really helps."

THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

The Master Gardener Program recruits volunteers to provide horticulture education community-wide. After recruitment these Extension volunteers are trained for about 50 hours.

Under the program, the training obligates volunteers to serve an equal number of hours of volunteer community service. Many participants continue to work with Master Gardener activities long after their obligation is over.

Alice Nicolson became a Master Gardener in 1980, when the program began in Arlington County, Va.

Over the past 12 years, Nicolson has taught plant clinics and answered consumer questions on the Horticulture Hotline. The Hotline volunteers handle about 25,000 telephone calls each year. Nicolson also has conducted training in plant identification, and she helped found the national organization of the Master Gardeners International Corporation (MAGIC).

MAGIC publishes a quarterly newsletter, issues a directory of Master Gardener programs nationwide, maintains a Master Gardener information database, and helps coordinate the efforts of the national Master Gardener community.

"For the past four years, I've spent most of my time working with MAGIC," Nicolson said. "I still enjoy sharing my enthusiasm for plants and gardening with others."

Master Gardeners teach people how to care for their gardens in an environmentally sensitive way. "A lot of people don't realize that programs like this impact in many areas," Nicolson said.

People who are not trained to use fertilizers and pesticides can often use them in excess. "It's not just beautification we're after, it's also a matter of keeping the community environmentally safe," said Nicolson.

THE EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

"I enjoy working with people and helping them, especially when they have a disabled child," said Candida Rivas, recipient of the 1992 Outstanding Adult Learner Award, presented by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education.

In 1946 Rivas became a grammar school teacher in her native Guatemala. In 1973 she and her family moved to the United States, seeking medical care for a daughter with Downs Syndrome.

Because of her daughter's condition, Rivas became involved in the Chicago community where the family lives. She attended training programs that enabled her to learn more about Downs Syndrome. Years later, she became interested in nutrition.

Linda, Rivas' daughter needed to maintain a certain weight and keep her cholesterol level within a specified range. Rivas enrolled in Illinois Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

As a result of her nutrition education, the entire family improved their eating habits and started practicing healthier food preparation methods.

Rivas was so impressed with EFNEP she wanted others to benefit from the program. But there was a problem.

Rivas knew that many people could not participate in EFNEP during the week. So she recruited 10 parents willing to learn about nutrition on Saturdays. She contacted an EFNEP staff person and asked if someone could teach the parents. Now, due to Rivas' efforts, this group meets every third Saturday for nutrition lessons.

4-H/YOUTH

In 1975 when she and her family arrived in this country from Vietnam, Catrina Huynh spoke no English. Since that time she has become a national 4-H youth leader, excelling in communications, and winning many local, district, regional, and state communications contests. She also served on the Hennepin County Executive Council and on numerous project committees. Huynh was a youth trustee on the Minnesota State 4-H Foundation and served as a National 4-H Ambassador.

The highlight of Huynh's 4-H career came during the 1988 National Extension Agents Conference when she gave recognition to volunteers and the significance of their work with young people. According to Bill Ivendsgaard, with the University of Minnesota's Extension Service, Huynh's address was a personal account of how a particular 4-H leader, Elve Koch, helped her and made it possible for her to become confident, poised, and a motivator with peers.

Today, Huynh is a marketing manager for Encyclopaedia Britannica while saving money to return to the University of Minnesota where she is majoring in communications.

Huynh also is a fundraiser speaker for the refugee program that brought her and her family to Minnesota from Vietnam.

As for the future, her goal is to someday be a network reporter.

EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS

"Lillian Hicks is one of those people who knows how to use all 24 of the hours in each day," says Amelia County Extension agent Kay Burke.

Hicks, a 60-year old mother of five, has been a member of Extension Homemakers more than 25 years. She is also chairperson of the Amelia County Extension Homemakers Council and a volunteer for the Keep Amelia Beautiful campaign, the county literacy program, the county health fair, and Amelia Day.

Hicks is also a member of the Southside Electric Cooperative board of directors, a leader in her local Disabled American Veterans chapter, her county Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary, the Deaconess Auxiliary, the Flower Hill Baptist Church, and the Women's Missionary Auxiliary.

"I love to volunteer," Hicks said. "You meet the most wonderful people. And when it comes to youth, 4-H is maybe the most affordable, worthwhile, and sponsorable community service I know of."

Recently, Hicks accepted an invitation from Virginia Agriculture Commissioner Clinton Turner to go to Russia as part of an agricultural and trade mission.

"I see my contribution to this mission as keeping the focus on families and how the recent changes in Russia have affected this part of the Russian farm community," she said.

Hicks' daughter, Sylvia, said of her mother's many voluntary activities: "Volunteerism is her way of giving back to the community." It's difficult to disagree with this assessment when one considers all Lillian

Hicks has done, not for money, not for advantage, but from the heart.

If you would like to give something back to your community, become an Extension volunteer. Contact your state or county Extension office for information.

Charles Morgan (202) 720-3401

Issued April 27, 1992

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BELTSVILLE SYMPOSIUM TO REPORT ON WATER QUALITY

WASHINGTON, April 27—Safeguarding the quality of the nation's lakes, streams, and groundwater will be the focus of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 17th annual symposium sponsored by the Beltsville, Md., Agricultural Research Center, May 4-8.

About 100 scientists from federal and private agencies and universities will report the latest findings on this year's theme, "Agricultural Water Quality Priorities, A Team Approach for Conserving Natural Resources."

Organizations represented will include the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Geological Survey, in addition to the host agency, USDA's Agricultural Research Service, which operates the Beltsville center.

"Water quality is one area of research that requires close cooperation among many agencies and disciplines," said soil scientist Timothy J. Gish. He and Ali Sadeghi of the center's Natural Resources Institute will cochair the symposium.

"Research is continually finding better ways to ensure that fertilizers and pesticides are used safely and don't get into our waterways," said Essex E. Finney, the center's director.

Research progress to be reported includes:

- * The first soil test for actually measuring soil nitrogen in the eastern half of the country. Eastern soil tests now only estimate the nitrogen in the soil.

- * Soil microorganisms that have a genetic "on-off" switch for degrading herbicides in a field. Microbes would be activated after the chemicals have killed weeds and before the chemicals can leach into groundwater.

* A litmus-like test for phosphorous that quickly reveals when to cut back applications of the nutrient in farm fields or gardens. If rain washes off too much phosphorous in fertilizer, the runoff could harm the quality of lakes and streams.

Don Comis (301) 504-9073

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USDA, INDUSTRY SEEK NEW SOYBEAN SEED ANALYSIS

WASHINGTON, April 28—Analyzing the fatty acid content of soybeans in minutes instead of hours will soon become a reality now that U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists and an Iowa company have teamed up to develop a computerized method for testing individual soybean seeds.

“Our challenge is to create a computer system so that individual seeds can be analyzed quickly and economically, but without destroying the germplasm,” said James F. Cavins of USDA’s Agricultural Research Service. Current analysis requires that seeds be almost entirely destroyed to determine their chemical composition.

USDA’s research agency and MBS Inc. of Ames, Iowa, have signed a three-year cooperative research and development agreement on the computer project. The work is being done at the ARS National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR) in Peoria.

“A computerized method will enable soybean breeders to screen seeds faster, possibly taking as much as two years off development of improved and specialized soybean varieties,” said Cavins, who is research leader for NCAUR’s analytical chemistry support unit. Plant breeding may take at least 10 years to get a new variety.

Seeds with altered fatty acid composition are valuable for soybean oil processors. For example, soybeans lower in linolenic acid yield an oil with less off-flavors when used in cooking, according to Cavins.

“When fully developed, the new computerized method could screen a single seed in two minutes compared to six hours with the current method,” said Cavins. Peoria researchers analyze about 25,000 soybean seed samples each year for public seed breeders.

In the new method, a near-infrared spectrometer is used to conduct chemical analyses of soybean seeds. The spectrometer passes an invisible beam of near-infrared light through each seed. The amount of light

absorbed is fed into computer software, which generates measurements on fatty acid content.

"Our development of the near-infrared technique for the specific purpose of analyzing fatty acid content could cut in half the number of soybean seed samples requiring further analysis," said Cavins.

Thomas J. Brums, technical manager in MBS Inc.'s specialty genetics group in Ames, said that in many cases, soybean breeders have only a few valuable seeds to check for potential uses. "The development of NIR analysis will save the most valuable seeds," he said.

MBS Inc. plans to offer the computerized technology as a service to private soybean breeders.

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WATER OUTLOOK REMAINS BLEAK FOR MOST OF WEST

WASHINGTON, April 28—Water supply conditions for many Western states remain below-to well-below average due to continued dry weather, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service.

"Warm temperatures and a lack of precipitation throughout much of the West in March caused snowpack to melt sooner than usual for the month," said William Richards, chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service. "It appears that spring and summer streamflows will be below-to well-below average for most of the West, resulting in limited water supplies for some producers."

Richards said spring and summer streamflows are forecast to be near-to well-above average in Alaska, portions of the Columbia River Basin in British Columbia, and areas in southern Utah, southern Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico.

Reservoir storage remains near-to well-above average for most states. At 15 percent of average, Nevada remains at the lowest level in the West, relative to average reservoir storage.

Western states depend on snowmelt for about 75 percent of their water supply. SCS and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service jointly analyze snow and precipitation data to forecast seasonal runoff in the West.

The state-by-state outlook:

ALASKA—While March proved to be a dry month across most of Alaska, the southern coastal areas continued to receive above-average precipitation. Streamflow forecasts are for near-average in the Yukon River Basin, below-average on other streams emptying into the Bering Sea, and above-to much above-average on rivers draining the mountains in the south and southeast areas of Alaska.

ARIZONA—Water supplies for Arizona this spring should be excellent. March precipitation was well-above-average in the state. Streamflow during March was well-above normal for the month. Reservoir storage was above-average for April 1.

CALIFORNIA—Streamflow volumes are forecast at 53 percent of average statewide; 62 percent in the Trinity and Upper Sacramento basins; 47 percent in the Feather, Yuba and American basins; 54 percent in the San Joaquin Drainage; and 48 percent in the Tulare Lake Basin. Reservoir storage for the state is currently 70 percent of average. Reservoir storage ranges from 38 and 39 percent of average at Pine Flat and McClure respectively to 122 percent at Millerton.

COLORADO—Northwest Colorado continues to have the driest outlook, hampered by the lack of available reservoir storage. Spring and summer streamflows are expected to be slightly below-average to below-average across much of the state.

IDAHO—Warm temperatures and lack of mountain precipitation reduced snowpack levels to less than half of normal across southern Idaho. As a result, runoff forecasts in many central and southern Idaho streams call for less than half of average flow. Nearly empty reservoirs compound the problem. Many areas can expect one of the lowest water supplies of record.

MONTANA—March mountain precipitation was well-below average in Montana with most areas receiving only 30 to 50 percent of average. Reservoir storage is generally near-to above-average. Spring and summer streamflows are expected to be below-to well-below average across the state. Some basins in western and central Montana are forecast to have near record low flows this spring and summer.

NEVADA—Water supply conditions for the Great Basin of Nevada and California remain well-below average, and severe drought conditions continue for the northern half of the state. Central and southern Nevada received above-average precipitation during March. Without above-normal spring precipitation, surface water demands for irrigation will not be fully

met and extreme shortages will occur throughout northern Nevada.

NEW MEXICO—Snowpack conditions statewide remain in the near-average to much-above average range, except for the Zuni/Bluewater Basins, which dropped to much-below average due to rapid melt conditions during March. Statewide snowpack is 151 percent of average. Near-average to much-above average runoff is expected throughout New Mexico this spring and summer.

OREGON—Extreme drought conditions are forecast for eastern Oregon. March was a devastating month for Oregon summer water supplies. Precipitation for the month was extremely poor throughout the state. The current Oregon snowpack is the lowest in the West and is only half of what it was in 1977 (the last major drought year). Reservoir storage remains very poor at only 54 percent of average. Twenty-two counties have been declared as drought emergencies.

UTAH—Northern Utah is facing one of the lowest runoff seasons in years. Record low snowpacks were recorded at 22 northern Utah sites, and an additional 10 sites had their second lowest readings. Surface water will be in short supply this year for most of northern and central Utah.

WASHINGTON—March precipitation was 37 percent of normal statewide and varied from 20 percent of average in the Olympic Basin to 49 percent in the Yakima Basin. Forecasts for spring and summer runoff vary from 88 percent of average for the Entiat River to 46 percent of average for the Mill Creek in the Walla Walla Basin. April 1 reservoir storage is generally good, with reservoirs in the Yakima Basin at 110 percent of average and 77 percent of capacity.

WYOMING—Runoff forecasts indicate that flows will be below-to much-below average during the spring and summer months. Reservoir storage remains above-average in most areas of the state. Keyhole and Pathfinder are exceptions. Water users can expect shortages everywhere in Wyoming.

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